

Comoros

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

An estimated 35.6 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years were counted as working in Comoros in 2000. Approximately 35 percent of all boys 5 to 14 were working compared to 36.2 percent of girls in the same age group.¹¹⁹⁰ Children work in agriculture and family enterprises, particularly in subsistence farming and fishing.¹¹⁹¹ Children, some as young as 7 years old, also work as domestic servants in exchange for food and shelter.¹¹⁹² There are also growing numbers of working street children.¹¹⁹³

Primary education is compulsory until the age of 14.¹¹⁹⁴ According to the U.S. Department of State, however, the government does not enforce attendance, and boys are often given preference.¹¹⁹⁵ In 2002, the gross primary enrollment rate was 90 percent and in 1999, the most recent year for which data are available, the net primary enrollment rate was 55 percent.¹¹⁹⁶ Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. In 2000, 44.2 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years were attending school.¹¹⁹⁷ There is a general lack of facilities, equipment, qualified teachers, textbooks and other resources.¹¹⁹⁸ Salaries for teachers are often so far in arrears that many refuse to work.¹¹⁹⁹

¹¹⁹⁰ UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*, October 7, 2005, Section 6d. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms, such as the use of children in the illegal drug trade, prostitution, pornography, and trafficking. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section. Such statistics and information may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on the definition of working children and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section of this report.

¹¹⁹¹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention: Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Comoros*, CRC/C/15/Add.141, October 2000, para. 48. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2004: Comoros*, Washington, DC, February 28, 2005, Section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41596.htm>.

¹¹⁹² UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record of the 666th Meeting: Comoros*, CDC/C/SR.666, Geneva, June 2001, para. 3. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Comoros*, Section 6d.

¹¹⁹³ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations*, para. 39. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record*, para. 3.

¹¹⁹⁴ Angela Melchiorre, "Comoros" in *At What Age are school-children employed, married, and taken to court?* ed. Duncan Wilson, 2004; available from <http://www.right-to-education.org/>.

¹¹⁹⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Comoros*, Section 5.

¹¹⁹⁶ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportID=51> (Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios, Primary; accessed December 2005).

¹¹⁹⁷ UCW analysis of ILO SIMPOC, UNICEF MICS, and World Bank surveys, *Child Economic Activity and School Attendance Rates*.

¹¹⁹⁸ Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Comoros: Trouble in Paradise", IRINnews.org, [online], December 8, 2003; available from <http://www.irinnews.org>. See also Integrated Regional Information Networks, "Southern Africa: UNICEF appeals for assistance for region's children", IRINnews.org, [online], December 2, 2003; available from <http://www.irinnews.org>.

¹¹⁹⁹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Summary Record*, para. 23.

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Code sets the minimum age for employment at 15 years.¹²⁰⁰ The Constitution prohibits forced and bonded labor, but the U.S. Department of State reports that the government does not prohibit forced or compulsory labor by children.¹²⁰¹ Laws protecting the rights and welfare of children do not appear to be enforced due to the lack of inspectors.¹²⁰²

Unmarried children under the age of 18 are considered minors, and the law protects them from sexual exploitation, prostitution, and pornography.¹²⁰³ The Criminal Code provides for 2 to 5 years of imprisonment and a fine of 150,000 to 2,000,000 francs (USD 364 to 4852) for anyone who is complicit in the prostitution of a minor or uses threats, coercion, violence, assault, or the abuse of authority.¹²⁰⁴ Article 323 of the Criminal Code also provides for the same penalties for complicity in international trafficking.¹²⁰⁵ A juvenile court can impose protective measures for persons under 21 years discovered engaging in prostitution.¹²⁰⁶

Current Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Comoros is working to improve educational infrastructure with the assistance of a World Bank loan that supports the Service Support Credit Project. The project is scheduled to run through 2008.¹²⁰⁷

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments		
Ratified Convention 138	3/17/2004	✓
Ratified Convention 182	3/17/2004	✓
ILO-IPEC Member		
National Plan for Children		
National Child Labor Action Plan		
Sector Action Plan		

¹²⁰⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Comoros*, Section 6d.

¹²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Section 6a.

¹²⁰² *Ibid.*, Section 5.

¹²⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰⁴ *Criminal Code of Comoros*, Article 323; available from <http://209.190.246.239/protectionproject/statutesPDF/Comorosf.pdf>.

¹²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Article 327.

¹²⁰⁷ World Bank, *Service Support Credit*, in Projects Database, [online] 2004 [cited May 18, 2004]; available from <http://www.web.worldbank.org/external/default/main?pagePK=64027221&piPK=64027220&theSitePK=64027220&menuPK=349969&Projectid=P084315>. See also World Bank, *Social Fund Project*, in Projects Database, [online] 2004 [cited May 18, 2004]; available from <http://www.web.worldbank.org/external/default/main?pagePK=64027221&piPK=64027220&theSitePK=349937&menuPK=349969&Projectid=P044824>.